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Reinforcing Charisma in the Bureaucratisation of Indonesian Islamic Organisations

Kevin W. Fogg

Abstract: Many studies of Islam in Indonesia have focused on the mass Islamic organisations that form the backbone of civil society and Indonesian religious life. However, studies of these organisations have not appreciated the central place of charisma amid their bureaucratic features. This article looks at the case of Alkhairaat, a mass Islamic organisation headquartered in Central Sulawesi but spread throughout eastern Indonesia, as a bureaucracy built to reinforce and perpetuate the charisma of its founder, Sayyid Idrus bin Salim al-Jufri. The case of Alkhairaat demonstrates how mass Islamic organisations in Indonesia bureaucratise Islam but also, in doing this, defy the broader trend of legalisation. Instead, the on-going veneration of the founder's charisma helps to make sense of the continuing attention to supernatural occurrences among traditionalist Indonesian Muslims and the power of organisational leaders over their followers.

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Keywords: Indonesia, Central Sulawesi, charisma, bureaucratisation, Islamic organisations, Alkhairaat

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Introduction

Indonesian Islam is known, among other features, for its strong civil society organisations.[1] The prominent roles of the world's largest Islamic organisation, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and Indonesia's hyper-regimented, modernist, mass religious organisation, Muhammadiyah, have been chronicled in study after study of Indonesian religious life (Pringle 2010; Kersten 2015; Hefner 2000; Menchik 2016; Bush 2014). Recent scholarship has also widened the study of newer, more conservative Islamic social organisations, such as Wahdah Islamiyah (Chaplin 2017), Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengkajian Islam (Burhani 2016), Komite Persiapan Penegakan Syari'ah Islam (Mujiburrahman 2013), or the Tarbiyah Movement (Permata 2016), although these are more limited in their scope and influence, unlike the huge and all-encompassing NU and Muhammadiyah. The general conception of a mass Islamic organisation in Indonesia would include not just a large primary educational infrastructure, associated mosques, and affiliated religious gatherings, but also children's play groups, social ventures, universities, *fatwa* councils, and auxiliary organisations for women, youth, and students (cf. van Bruinessen 2013: 21–28). Broadly speaking, scholars have for decades presented the organisations as both rationalised and bureaucratised.[2] Although all religious bureaucracies[3] must have some degree of supernatural content in their religious

1 The research for this article was supported in part by an In-Bound Visiting Researcher fellowship from the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University of Jakarta and facilitated by sabbatical leave from the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies. I am thankful to Arskal Salim and his colleagues for their support. I also express my gratitude to Sayyid Saggaf bin Muhammad al-Jufri, Supreme Head of Alkhairaat, and Dr Lukman Tahir, Secretary-General of Alkhairaat, for their support in the field while I was researching the organisation. I conducted this research under the following research permits from the Indonesian Ministry of Research and Technology (now Research, Technology, and Higher Education): Surat Izin Penelitian No. 231/FRP/SM/X/2009, Surat Izin Penelitian No. 0036/EXT/SIP/FRP/SM/VII/2010 (Perpanjangan I) and Surat Izin Penelitian No. 244/SIP/FRP/E5/Dit.KINII/2016. I am also grateful to Dominik M. Müller, Matthew J. Walton, and an anonymous reviewer from *JCSAA* for their helpful suggestions on earlier drafts. The views in this article are the author's and are not meant to represent any other individual or institution.

2 This is especially true for the literature on Muhammadiyah, such as Nakamura 1983; Peacock 1978. Some accounts present NU in very similar terms, however, such as Ali 2016: 51–55.

3 In thinking about bureaucracies throughout this article, I am explicitly guided by the characteristics and patterns described by Max Weber (Weber 2009; Ei-

activities, most studies of mass Islamic organisations in Indonesia treat them as depersonalised bureaucracies and are not particularly structured around the personal charisma of leaders.

The tendency towards bureaucratisation of Muslim community life in the 20th century was paralleled by the approach of the Indonesian state, which also pursued the bureaucratisation of Islam (and religion more broadly). This included the categorisation of religious life (Fogg forthcoming a), the formalisation of religious rulings (Ichwan 2013), and the bureaucratisation of Islamic law (Feener 2013). Indeed, most studies related to the bureaucratisation of Islam in Indonesia focus on the state, rather than on society (e.g., Noer 1978; Porter 2002; Sezgin and Kunkler 2014; cf. Ricklefs 2012, which looks equally at state and society). This is reflected in the Islamic world more broadly, where most studies chronicling the recent history of the bureaucratisation of Islam in the 20th century have focused on the state (e.g., Antoun 2006; Tasar 2018; Mohamad 2010).

Throughout the scholarship, the bureaucratisation of Islam – including in the other articles in this special issue – is probed primarily with regard to legalisation and rationalisation, with a heavy emphasis on the codified, textual traditions of the Islamic scriptures and subsequent tradition of jurisprudence and a simultaneous de-emphasis on miraculous or supernatural experiences.[4] This is a natural correlation, in many ways, because, in the words of Weber, 'Bureaucratic authority is specifically rational in the sense of being bound to intellectually analysable rules' (Eisenstadt 1968: 52–53). In the case of Islam, the 'intellectually analysable rules' that come to the fore are the Islamic jurisprudential tradition (and plain-text readings of the foundational documents: the scriptures). Thus, the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (a quasi-state board issuing somewhat authoritative juridical rulings since 1975) as the classic case of the bureaucratisation of Islam in Indonesia, is also one of the most textually driven and rationalised bodies in the country's religious landscape (Ich-

senstadt 1968). These need not be tied to the state, but they should be (among other possible characteristics) formalised, follow written rules, adhere to fixed jurisdictional areas and have some degree of hierarchy.

4 See also the discussion of legalisation as one of the forms of the routinisation of charisma in Max Weber's thought (e.g., Eisenstadt 1968: 58); 'legalisation' is taken here in its Weberian sense to mean creating a system based on consistent, codified rules (not, as in common usage, bringing a phenomenon or person onto the right side of the law). Weber often presents this as part of bureaucratisation as one of the long-term outcomes of the routinisation of charisma. Müller's contribution to this special issue is an exception in probing the limits of rationalisation and the role of the supernatural.

wan 2013). By contrast, Islamic organisations (particularly those identified as 'traditionalist') present an example where Islam can be routinised into bureaucracy – with regular practices, the transmission of charismatic authority onto successors, formalisation, and hierarchy – without losing the centrality of irrational phenomena such as miracles.

This article examines the bureaucratisation of one mass Islamic organisation in eastern Indonesia, as a case study of ground-up bureaucratisation. This makes the topic unusual in two ways. First, it is fundamentally ambivalent towards the state (although somewhat impacted by it, in indirect and nonessential ways). Second, the bureaucratisation that grows up from a local Muslim community is built not necessarily to promote strongly depersonalised, rationalised, textual Islam, but rather to recognise and build on the awe-inspiring personal charisma of a single spiritual leader. While the strength and continuity of locally-grounded, non-textual, para-nomian or supra-nomian (cf. Ahmed 2016) practices among Indonesian Muslims has been well documented in the last century (e.g., Geertz 1960a; Woodward 1989; Ricklefs 2012), this side of religious practice has largely been seen in tension with the bureaucratisation – and concomitant legalisation – of Islam in the state. Fundamentally, this case study presents the bureaucratisation of Islam as routinisation of charisma *without* the concomitant rationalisation and legalisation of the tradition.

This paper looks at the case of Sayyid Idrus bin Salim al-Jufri, a Hadrami Arab who became a religious leader in Indonesia, and the mass organisation Alkhairaat that he founded, based in Central Sulawesi and active throughout eastern Indonesia. This group, which claims to be the third largest mass Islamic organisation in Indonesia,[5] has engaged in the bureaucratisation of Islam since its founding in 1956, but has simultaneously preserved and promoted ideas of personal charisma of the founder, who was famed for his association with miracles and supernatural events.

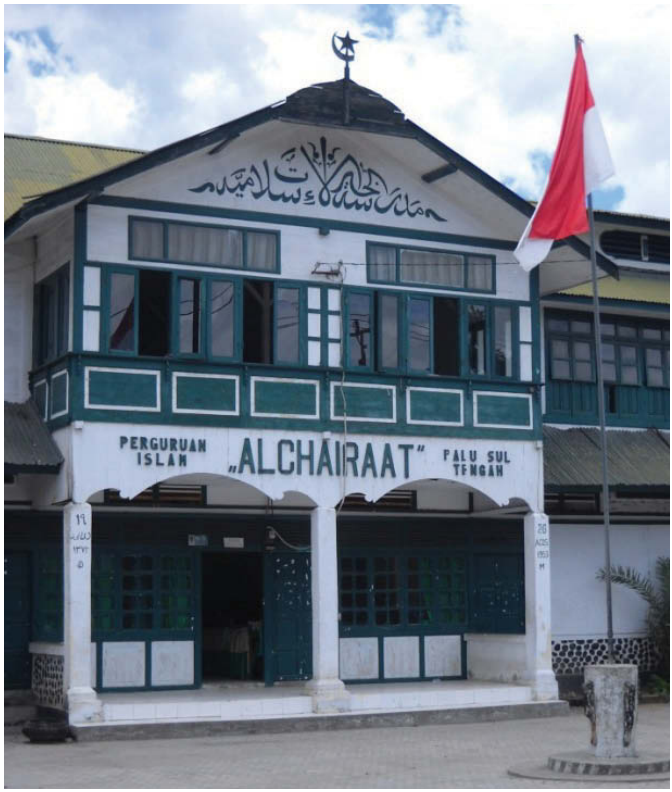
Looking at the charisma of the founder, the subsequent bureaucratisation of this charisma in the organisation of Alkhairaat, and the reinforcement of charisma through the organisational bureaucracy until today, one can see that the bureaucratisation of Islam is not always tied to rationalisation, legalisation, or textualism. Indeed, Alkhairaat and other traditionalist mass Islamic organisations in Indonesia have developed all the trappings and mentality of bureaucracy without an exclusive focus on

5 This claim, it should be noted, cannot be taken at face value. For example, the mass organisations Jamiyatul Washliyah (strongest in North Sumatra) and Nahdlatul Wathan (based on Lombok) similarly claim to be the third largest in Indonesia, but none of these claims has been substantiated by outside research.

the controlled, textual authority of Islamic law, instead preserving the very personalised authority of holy men.

The decoupling of legalisation and bureaucratisation is not unique to this case; it has been observed in many other non-European religious societies in the 20th and 21st centuries. However, it is important to study the process by which Indonesia has retained its incredibly high level of bureaucratisation and also perpetuated the importance of religious charisma. Previous work on Indonesian Islam has generally looked at one side or the other, not the point at which charisma and bureaucracy meet. Recognising the continuing centrality of personalised charisma in Indonesian Islamic organisations is crucial to understanding these bodies and the way they function.

Figure 1. The Central Building of the Alkhairaat School Complex in Palu, Central Sulawesi



Source: Photo by Kevin W. Fogg, 2010.

Charisma in Sayyid Idrus

The central charismatic figure of this case study is Sayyid Idrus bin Salim al-Jufri (1891–1969), a cleric born in Yemen to a Hadrami Arab father (the title 'Sayyid' denotes the family was also descended from the Prophet) and a Buginese mother. After being expelled from Yemen in the mid-1920s, Sayyid Idrus followed the pattern in his family, migrating to the Dutch East Indies, where he first engaged in trade on the north coast of Java and then settled around 1930 in Palu, now the capital of Central Sulawesi province (Bachmid 2007).

Although Sayyid Idrus only spoke Arabic and none of the local languages of Sulawesi, he became a tremendously successful teacher and Islamic leader, while maintaining his trading interests. In 1930 he founded his own school, Madrasah Alkhairaat in Palu (Figure 1), one of the first formal educational institutions established in the region, and it soon drew students from across the province (Gani Jumat 2012: 74). The name Alkhairaat invokes a Qur'anic instruction to do good deeds, made at several junctures in the scriptures (Yanggo et al. 2014: xii).[6] Within a few years, the school was drawing students from other provinces and even other islands. One of the important ways in which Sayyid Idrus expanded his influence was by collecting students during his travels on business; an oxcart (or in some cases boat) would set out full of goods for sale and return full of students for the school (Daud Towandu 2016). The personal appeal of this man and his lineage directly to Islam's holiest family made Muslims from Gorontalo, Kalimantan, North Maluku, and other regions ready to send their sons off under his care. His impressive level of Islamic knowledge, heightened perhaps by his Arab identity, was one pillar of his charisma.

An even more important aspect of Sayyid Idrus's charisma was his personal spiritual power and association with supernatural events, often referred to in Indonesian as *barakah* (from the Arabic for blessing) or *keramah* (from the Arabic for dignity or honour, but also signifying in Arabic a miracle by a saintly figure). Sayyid Idrus is venerated for his many miraculous deeds, both in private and very public. Dozens, if not hundreds, of stories along these lines circulate among the Muslim community in regions where he was active. These range from causing a teapot to contain enough coconut water to fill one hundred glasses (Husein Habibu 2016), to reviving a disciple thought to be dead (Abdul Basyit

6 The verses where the Arabic word "alkhairaat" appears are Sura al-Baqarah 2:148, Sura Al-Imran 3:114, Sura al-Ma'idah 5:48, Sura at-Tawba 9:88, Sura al-Anbiya 21: 73 and 90, Sura al-Mu'minun 23:56 and 61, and Sura Fatir 35:32.

Arsyad 2016), to having a freshwater spring well up at the first place he set down his cane on an island (Abd Salam Thahir 2013). In one of the most intensely personal stories about the miraculous nature of Sayyid Idrus, while I was interviewing his grandson Sayyid Saggaf bin Muhammad al-Jufri, an Alkhairaat leader accompanying me could not help himself asking, 'Did the Great Teacher [i.e., Sayyid Idrus] ever have bowel movements?' Apparently, many students testified that they never remembered their teacher excusing himself or taking time for this bodily function, which lead to some speculation that perhaps God had given him the blessing of special digestion so as to eliminate the need for defecation. Sayyid Saggaf laughed in response and assured us, 'All of that was normal' (Saggaf al-Jufri 2016).

The most popular miracle story relating to Sayyid Idrus involved a boat ride in Tomini Bay, when he ordered one of his most loyal students to hop out of the boat onto the water (either, according to various accounts, in order to pull the boat forward in dead winds or to collect the teacher's turban, which had flown off), and the student was able to walk on the surface of the sea without sinking in or getting wet (Saggaf al-Jufri 2016; Daud Towandu 2016; Dahlan Tangkadere 2016; Sa'diyah binti Sheikh Bahmid 2013). This story is now often repeated not only by his direct students and leaders of the organisation but by Muslims of all stripes in Central Sulawesi. In fact, the fame of Sayyid Idrus's supernatural power (through God's grace) is so central to his legacy that during a month of conducting interviews about the organisation, every single one of the 18 informants interviewed for oral histories of the organisation Alkhairaat offered at least one story of a miracle, without prompting.[7]

These miracles are interpreted by Sayyid Idrus's disciples, their students, and the Muslim public as signs of the special love God held for Sayyid Idrus. Sayyid Idrus's grandson treated the issue by explaining 'God gives *keramah* to his servants whom he loves' (Saggaf al-Jufri 2016). Of course, both in exceeding the normal constraints of reality and in being limited to a select few, the miraculous capacity meets exactly the core requirement of Weber for charisma: 'specific gifts of the body and spirit; and these gifts have been believed to be supernatural, not accessible to everybody' (Weber 2009: 245).

Sayyid Idrus also meets many other classical characteristics of Weberian charisma. For example, in his early teaching career in the 1930s and 1940s, 'the social relationships directly involved [were] strictly per-

7 This was the author's experience specifically when conducting oral history interviews about Alkhairaat in November 2016, although visits to Central Sulawesi since 2010 have produced similar responses from interviewees.

sonal, based on the validity and practice of charismatic personal qualities' (Eisenstadt 1968: 54). His Arab foreignness, including continuing to speak exclusively Arabic, even after spending most of his life in Indonesia, facilitated (at least a façade of) 'the unavoidable separation from this world of those who partake of charisma' (Weber 2009: 248) – he was seen as a thing apart, forever separated from the mundane.[8]

As part of his separation from the mundane, Sayyid Idrus also managed to stay out of matters of state, separated from politics and government. Although he was nationalist in the sense of supporting the independence of Indonesia from non-Muslim rulers and encouraged his students to support the Indonesian nationalist project, he never participated in party politics nor directed specific forms of participation in government by his followers (Gani Jumat 2012). Thus, he stands in contrast with Geertz's study of the Javanese *kyai* (Islamic leaders), who were 'destroying the essential foundations' of their privileged position in society by engaging in direct electoral politics, and thus losing any aura of charisma (1960b: 230).[9] This also stands in contrast to the 'modernist Islamic politician' studied by Anderson in the same period, who had to either appeal to Islamic scriptural authority to boost prestige with Muslims or to non-Islamic symbols of power to appeal beyond devout Muslims (Anderson 2009: 72). Sayyid Idrus unambiguously deployed both; he was a learned scholar and teacher of Islamic texts, and his supernatural acts appealed to non-Islamic ideas of power in the region.

None of this focus on his charisma and miraculous deeds should suggest that Sayyid Idrus was promoting a heterodox or syncretic form of Islam. He was, by all accounts, a Muslim scholar whose teachings

8 Admittedly, he was not separated from the mundane in all ways; as a trader, he still participated in the economic activities of this world. Contrast Weber's typology: 'In general, charisma rejects all rational economic conduct' and 'In its "pure" form, charisma is never a source of private gain for its holders in the sense of economic exploitation by the making of a deal' (Weber 2009: 247). Sayyid Idrus's deviation from the Weberian norm may connect to the Islamic tradition, in which the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and his first wife, Khadija, were also engaged in trade and mundane economic activity (Hodgson 1974: 158).

9 It must be conceded that there has been debate among Indonesians over the idea that participation in worldly political matters shatters the religious authority of Islamic clerics. This ranges from leading Islamic thinkers, like Nurcholish Madjid, who believe that religion must be separated from politics in order to save both (Kersten 2011: 56–57), to historians who argue that the *ulama* have long been deeply intertwined with political power in pre-independent Indonesia, without losing their spiritual status (Burhanuddin 2012).

adhered tightly to traditionalist ideas of Islamic orthodoxy: grounded in the Qur'an, steeped in jurisprudential tradition, and deeply engaged with classical texts. To use the concepts developed by Shahab Ahmed (2016), Sayyid Idrus's access to supra-nomian or para-nomian forms of Islam does not necessarily make him anti-nomian.

Notably, however, the orthodoxy and textual knowledge that were the highlight of many Alkhairaat educational institutions (Wasilah Syihabuddin 2017) are not foregrounded in the bureaucracy that rose from the Sayyid Idrus's charisma. Moving forward, his disciples and followers would not call on the authority of the texts he taught, but rather would invoke the man doing the teaching.[10]

Bureaucratisation of Alkhairaat

More than a decade before the death of this charismatic individual, the network surrounding him had already taken serious steps towards bureaucratisation. By the mid-1950s, the students and former students of Sayyid Idrus had grown quite numerous. As young men graduated from his Alkhairaat school in Palu, Sayyid Idrus would send them out to set up schools in other towns (usually at the request of leaders in those towns hoping to increase educational opportunities for local children). This meant that the impact of Sayyid Idrus was quickly multiplied through the students of his students (Daud Towandu 2016; Abd Salam Thahir 2013; Muhammad Said bin Abdullah 2017). To integrate and govern the growing movement, a formal organisation was created.

The organisation had its inaugural congress (called a *Muktamar*) in 1956, at the original school in Palu; the ostensible premise of the event was to celebrate 25 years of the school, but in the end it launched a new bureaucratic future for the followers of Sayyid Idrus (Yanggo et al. 2014: 143). The alumni and students who gathered agreed to officers and an organisational constitution over five days of meetings. The organisation took on the name Alkhairaat (after the original school) and many of the schools and other local bodies (mosques, charities, etc.) founded by the network of graduates took this name, too. The constitution (*Anggaran Dasar* in Indonesian), with 12 chapters and 17 articles, set out rules like the frequency of congresses, the process of establishing a branch, and

10 In addition to the historical cases presented below, I have observed this at many public and private meetings of the organisation, ranging from a sub-branch meeting in one of the most isolated corners of Central Sulawesi (Bungku, Morowali, October 2010), to a province-wide alumni gathering of over one thousand attendees in the capital of North Maluku (March 2017).

the governance of schools and other charities (Yanggo et al. 2014: 145–151). Sayyid Idrus was elected 'president' (*presiden*) of the organisation, with one of his nephews elected 'general head' (*ketua umum*), and the 15 other officers representing a mix of Hadrami Arabs, men from local ethnicities in Central Sulawesi, and immigrants from other regions (Banjar, Buginese) (Yanggo et al. 2014: 164–165).[11]

In the wake of this meeting and following the rules it laid out, the bureaucratic forms of the organisation spread quickly. Within 10 years, branches (*wilayah*), sub-branches (*cabang*), and chapters (*ranting*) had been established across the modern-day provinces of Central Sulawesi, Gorontalo, North Sulawesi, North Kalimantan, East Kalimantan, and North Maluku. At the second congress in 1963 (held a few years behind schedule), the organisation agreed to organisational by-laws (*Anggaran Rumah Tangga*), including a stunningly complex logo for the organisation, described in 12 bullet points including the exact number of lines to be used as shading to symbolise the year of the school's founding.

Sayyid Idrus passed away in 1969. His son, Sayyid Muhammad bin Idrus al-Jufri, acted as the head of Alkhairaat for five years (the title was changed from 'president' to 'supreme head' [*ketua utama*], but the position remained the same), before he passed away in 1974. The mantle was in turn passed to his son, Sayyid Saggaf bin Muhammad al-Jufri, the current incumbent. Although a direct descendent has always served as the supreme head (*ketua utama*) of Alkhairaat, and another descendent has served as the general head (*ketua umum*), the day-to-day leadership of the organisation has always been provided by a non-Arab Indonesian as the secretary-general (*sekretaris jenderal*). The position of secretary-general has been held by men of Buginese (South Sulawesi), Banjar (South Kalimantan), Kaili, Una-Una, Poso (Central Sulawesi), and even ethnic Chinese descent, making Alkhairaat the most ethnically open mass Islamic organisation in Indonesia. This is perhaps possible because of the wide variety of ethnicities in its regions of power in East Indonesia, and also because of the stability of Arab (what is more, *sayyid*) leadership at the very top.

Below the top leadership, Alkhairaat displays all the trappings of bureaucracy: hierarchy, written documentation, and 'fixed and official jurisdictional areas' (Weber 2009: 196). Over time, the core organisation added several auxiliary organisations (originally called *onderbouw*, borrowing the Dutch term, now simply *organisasi* in Indonesian): first for women

11 Compare the creation of these titles with Müller's observations in this issue about translating Islam into the 'language of bureaucracy.'

(pioneered by the founder's daughters), then later for youth, for students, for young women, and eventually for university students (Sharifah Sajida binti Idrus al-Jufri 2010; Zainal Abidin 2016). The central headquarters established committees (*komite*) and divisions (*bagian*), such as education, issuing fatwas, and providing social aid. These structures were then replicated at the branch and sometimes sub-branch level, along with a full run of officers including chairmen (*ketua*), secretaries (*sekretaris*), and treasurers (*bendahara*) (Salim Daeng Masuka 2016; Husein Habibu 2016). From the 1970s forward, the organisation even launched its own mass media, initially issuing a monthly publication, moving to a daily paper in the 1990s, and scaling back to a newspaper several times per week today (Darlis Muhammad 2016). In 2010, the General Head, Sayyid Ali bin Muhammad al-Jufri, claimed more than 18 million 'sympathisers' across eastern Indonesia (understood to be not only alumni and those who hold formal membership, but also all those who attend an Alkhairaat mosque or follow Alkhairaat's guidance on religious issues) (Ali bin Muhammad al-Jufri 2010). Today, Alkhairaat claims to have a presence in the majority of Indonesia's provinces (Lukman Thahir 2016b).

All of the structures created under the auspices of Alkhairaat functioned as a bureaucracy, and active members participate as bureaucratic functionaries. Individuals assume specific posts within the organisation (for example, secretary of the local chapter in Ampana) and train themselves in technical organisational knowledge – in this case, often through Alkhairaat studies (*ke-Alkhairaat-an*) courses in their primary and secondary education – so as to best manage their duties. Many individuals aspire to move up (becoming head of the Ampana chapter, or perhaps member of the proselytisation board of the Tojo Una-Una district sub-branch), and the most distinguished organisational careers will culminate in service as chairman of a provincial-level branch or service on a central committee.

To provide a detail of the bureaucratisation of religious life within Alkhairaat, one can look to the example of education. Islamic education forms the core activity of most Islamic organisations in Indonesia and falls into a long tradition within Muslim Southeast Asia. As late as a century ago, Islamic education in the archipelago was entirely personal, depending on an individual teacher and his relationships with students, his expertise in texts, and his personal authority to instruct students in the important elements of the religion (Fogg forthcoming b). Indeed, this was how the Madrasah Alkhairaat began in 1930: centred on the personal charisma and knowledge of Sayyid Idrus, the respect his students had for him, the authority society vested in him for teaching Islam

and determining what was orthodox and orthoprax. The earliest students did not follow a uniform curriculum, nor did they study under Sayyid Idrus for standardised amounts of time; much instruction was personalised and outside of regular hours (Daud Towandu 2016; Abd Salam Thahir 2013).

Over time, Alkhairaat built up a bureaucracy to standardise, specialise – basically, to bureaucratise – the organisation's education, made up of some 1550 schools across 12 provinces by 2016. From the first congress in 1956, there was an Education Section, tasked with overseeing instruction at the organisation's schools. The central Education Section (based at organisational headquarters in Palu) is replicated at each branch (provincial level), sub-branch (city or regency level), and chapter (village level) of the organisation with a chairman, vice-chairman, and secretary administering education in the area under their jurisdiction. At the central level, the Education Section sets the curriculum, chooses texts, and writes exams for the subjects taught at Alkhairaat schools that are not otherwise tested by government exams (or which Alkhairaat tests at a higher level, such as Arabic language). These subjects are Alkhairaat studies (*ke-Alkhairaat-an*), Arabic language, Islamic jurisprudence (*fikih*), and Islamic legal reasoning (*qawa'id*). These subjects survive in Alkhairaat schools because they date back to the days of Sayyid Idrus; thus, the authority of his practice continues to frame education today, despite the bureaucratisation of the organisation. The central Education Section also trains teachers and trains leaders of Education Sections at lower levels of the organisation, replicating itself and promoting a central vision of Alkhairaat generally and Alkhairaat education specifically (Salim Daeng Masuka 2016; Hafizuddin Thompo 2016).

It is noteworthy, however, that the bureaucratisation of Alkhairaat was built from the ground up – not forced upon the organisation by the government. While there was some inspiration from outside organisational practices (normative isomorphism), both from other Islamic organisations in form and from the government in terms of geographic divisions, there was no push from outside to force the followers of Sayyid Idrus to establish a formal organisation. Indeed, many other charismatic leaders in Indonesia from the early 20th century and before had seen their followings disband after their passing, with few institutional remnants (van Bruinessen 2007: 97). One must ask, then, about the motivations and methods of the initial bureaucratisation process built around this charismatic individual.

Motivations and Methods of Bureaucratisation

Since Sayyid Idrus was an Islamic cleric with no previous experience in formal social institutions of any kind (governmental or non-governmental), it is worth asking both why and how a formal organisation arose among his followers. Weber postulated against the establishment of such bureaucracy on the part of charismatic individuals, writing that charisma 'does not embrace permanent institutions like our bureaucratic "departments", which are independent of persons and of purely personal charisma' (Weber 2009: 246).[12] This does not match the case of Alkhairaat, however; Sayyid Idrus was present and even encouraged the institutionalisation of bodies like the Education Section and the organisation's constitution from 1956. There are several reasons why he and his followers would have embarked on the path of bureaucratisation when they did.

The motivations for creating the organisation seem to have been practical, political, and cultural. On a practical level, it is easy to understand how the management of the original school's alumni networks was made much easier with a formal organisation. Given the tremendous reputation of Sayyid Idrus and the very high demand for education by the Indonesian public in the 1930s through 1950s, he was often asked to send top graduates to establish schools in villages that did not yet have them. (This should not yet be seen as bureaucratisation but rather as the growth of a personal following around a charismatic leader.) The initial establishment of Islamic primary education was simple enough, because sending a single teacher could get the work started; however, as those small schools grew and as the need arose for secondary (or at least more advanced) education outside of the main spiritual centres, things became more complex. Coordination was needed among followers to make provisions for a kind of educational pyramid. Additionally, even the alumni who were not tasked with teaching wanted a way to remain connected to the spiritual network of the charismatic leader. A formal organisation fulfilled the practical demands of coordination and connection.

There may also have been some political motivations afoot at the time. Creating a bureaucratic structure helped Alkhairaat to capture resources locally. As the Indonesian state spread and grew its own bureaucracy, formalised organisations helped Alkhairaat members to win posts as civil servants in the local offices of the Ministry of Religion or as

12 Generally, Weber's model of routinisation of charisma was through a slow process of traditionalisation (leading to a patrimonial system), with the possibility of much later legalisation (leading to bureaucratisation). See Eisenstadt 1968; Weber 2009.

teachers of religious subjects in state schools. By having a modern organisation and bureaucracy, these spoils could be effectively channelled to loyal organisational activists. This was narrated by Dahlan Tangkadere, who became the head of the provincial Department of Religious Affairs office in the 1980s. Although he credits the prayers and personal intervention of Sayyid Idrus (from beyond the grave) for helping him to gain his position in the government, the ongoing support of Alkhairaat both solidified his position and directed the staffing of his office. He depended on the support of Alkhairaat organisation personalities to stay in post (amid corruption charges, among other difficulties), and dutifully brought in other Alkhairaat graduates, functionaries, and members to become workers in the government office (Dahlan Tangkadere 2016). Although the Department of Religious Affairs (now the Ministry of Religious Affairs) government bureaucracy was not so extensive in the 1950s, at that time there were already government-sponsored posts to teach Islam in state schools, which provided reliable supplementary income to Islamic teachers who otherwise depended on the generosity of the local Muslim community. Therefore, political opportunity may have acted as a pull mechanism, driving those affiliated with the charisma of Sayyid Idrus to organise themselves to bring benefits to the devotees collectively.[13]

The other reason why the organisation was formed in the 1950s was cultural, matching the organisational spirit of Indonesia more broadly at the time. In national life, not just in religious life, Indonesians were forming organisations of all kinds, with the same kind of formal constitutions and by-laws, auxiliary organisations for women and youth, mottos, symbols, etc. Because of the ubiquity of organisational life in newly independent Indonesia, there was some normative isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983), leading Islamic religious life towards formalisation and bureaucratisation along the same lines.

If the reasons for bureaucratisation were many, the forms of bureaucratisation were surprisingly uniform. In keeping with the normative patterns of Indonesian organisational life, Alkhairaat's structure is hardly distinguishable from that of other Islamic mass organisations in Indone-

13 Cf. Weber's analysis of the 'principle motives underlying this transformation' from a charismatic system to traditionalised or rationalised authority: 'the ideal and also the material interests of the followers in the continuation and the continual reactivation of the community' or 'the stronger still ideal and also stronger material interests of the members of the administrative staff, disciples or other followers of the charismatic leader in continuing their relationship' (Eisenstadt 1968: 54).

sia today, save for the super-structure of leadership by descendants of Sayyid Idrus at the very top. In fact, Alkhairaat is so very compatible with the largest Islamic organisation in Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama, that for many provinces in eastern Indonesia the personnel for both organisations is the same, with Alkhairaat leaders taking on the titles within the NU organisation for their province, while functionally only working for the more local organisation. Thus, the spiritual leader of Alkhairaat for North Maluku province, Muhammad Said bin Abdullah, fulfils the same role for NU and organises the provincial branches of each organisation so that they contain the same men with different positions (Muhammad Said bin Abdullah 2017). Similar arrangements are made in Central Sulawesi (Lukman Thahir 2016a).

The Perpetuation of Charisma through Bureaucracy

Although initial bureaucratisation was a product of the moment of the 1950s, and the increasing bureaucratisation since that time has proceeded organically, these developments have not lessened the centrality of charismatic authority in Alkhairaat. In fact, the inverse is true: the organisation Alkhairaat is a bureaucracy built around perpetuating the charisma of Sayyid Idrus as a figure of Islamic authority, not around legalisation or rationalising the Islamic community through recourse to consistent, written sources. This relates to Thomas Kirsch's observation among Zambian Pentecostals that bureaucratic forms within a religious denomination can actually reflect and even heighten the charisma of spiritual leaders by lending them an additional form of authority (Kirsch 2003). However, this case is different, because the fascination remains with the founder, a man now deceased for almost 50 years. How, then, does Alkhairaat perpetuate the charismatic authority of a departed leader?

The largest and most visible event each year in Alkhairaat explicitly centres around the person of Sayyid Idrus, and it also pulls on a classic Islamic tradition of recognising spiritual exceptionalism. Each year, on 12 Shawwal in the Islamic calendar (about two weeks after the end of Ramadan), Alkhairaat observes the *hawl*, or the anniversary of the death, of Sayyid Idrus. *Hawl* are a common feature of Sufi life in the Arab world, and similar events are also held for several Hadrami Arabs who were active on Java (Alatas 2014). For Alkhairaat and for Palu as a town, this serves both as a routinised annual event – a central ritual of 'organisational culture' – and as reinforcement of the charisma of Sayyid Idrus.

The *hawl* events for Alkhairaat are carefully organised every year by a committee appointed by the organisational leadership, coordinating with the regional office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the various auxiliary organisations of Alkhairaat. The committee, made up of representatives from different branches of the organisational bureaucracy, then carefully produces a program of events for the day of the *hawl*, involving a large procession through town and a series of presentations and speeches. Every year, two keynote speeches are organised: one from a leader of Alkhairaat, and one from outside the organisation. This has ranged from leading national professors (such as Quraish Syihab in 1993; see Anonymous 1993a) to ministers of state (Abdul Karim DL 2016: 189). The presence of 'national' guests, who usually come from Java hoping to win the sympathy and/or political support of Alkhairaat's followers, serves Alkhairaat's goal by reinforcing to those followers how the charisma of Sayyid Idrus gets broader recognition. The Alkhairaat speaker builds the charisma of Sayyid Idrus by retelling tales from his life or surveying the breadth of his legacy (Gani Jumat 2016). The events have regularly drawn thousands of participants over the years, and *hawl* festivities are now the largest regularly held event in Palu (Lukman Thahir 2016a).

The bureaucratic organisation of this commemoration does not detract from its focus on the founder's personal charisma; rather, as Kirsch (2003) has suggested, the participants and format bolster the charismatic authority of Sayyid Idrus that forms the central object of celebration. This charisma is also reinscribed in the life of the organisation through the supernatural power that is freshly available from Sayyid Idrus even beyond the grave. Traditionally, at the time of the *hawl*, pilgrims visit Sayyid Idrus's gravesite, within the Alkhairaat school complex, and pick up little pebbles. Upon returning home, they put the pebbles in glasses of water, which are then drunk by small children. An article from *Media Alkhairaat* in the early 1990s vouches for the efficacy of this tactic – children who drink such water receive great blessings (Anonymous 1993b).

Other posthumous miracles of Sayyid Idrus can occur throughout the year, and they are less ritualised and more personal. A current Alkhairaat leader, Gani Jumat, who was a student at the organisation's primary schools in Ternate, North Maluku province, in the 1980s, described an incident from those years. When several of his classmates were misbehaving, rough-housing, and generally making trouble, a teacher shouted them down, saying 'Can't you smell it?! The scent of Sayyid Idrus is in the classroom this morning.' Hearing this, all the students

sniffed, and Gani Jumat reports that he could also smell the scent of the great spiritual leader. All of them to this day cherish this as a miracle and are grateful for their experience of Sayyid Idrus (Gani Jumat 2016).

This episode is notable not just for its perpetuation of ideas of the supernatural abilities of the founder. The boys who were struck dumb by the scent had not, in fact, ever met the man whose scent it was – in fact, most had not even been alive in his lifetime. Thus, it is fair to say they had no rational standard for judging that this was, indeed, the scent of Sayyid Idrus. The fact that it has been so cherished and has, in at least Gani Jumat's case, been a part of his narrative of ascent through the ranks of the organisation, speaks to the centrality of miracles and the person of the founder in Alkhairaat, now almost 50 years after Sayyid Idrus's death. This also echoes Weber's analysis that 'Bureaucratic authority is specifically rational in the sense of being bound to intellectually analysable rules; while charismatic authority is specifically irrational in the sense of being foreign to all rules' (Eisenstadt 1968: 51–52). Gani Jumat must follow the bureaucratic rules of the organisation – demanding a personal connection with the organisation's founder – in order to advance up in the ranks, but the way that the charisma reached him did not follow the normal relationship of a master to disciple, because the charisma of the great spiritual leader cannot be contained in traditional limits.

For all of the attention to the miracles and charisma of Sayyid Idrus, there is a notable paucity of miracles ascribed to Sayyid Idrus's descendants. There are some milder blessings ascribed to Sayyid Saggaf, such as the ability to keep individuals safe while at sea (Abdul Karim DL 2016: 74). Prayers or items blessed by Sayyid Saggaf are also seen as extraordinarily valuable; a page of Arabic written out by Sayyid Saggaf by hand could be sold for a month's salary in Palu (Lukman Thahir 2010). However, no stories currently circulate of overt miracles or wonders by the incumbent head of Alkhairaat; instead, the stories continue to focus on the *keramah* of the founder, Sayyid Idrus.

As time passes and fewer and fewer direct students of Sayyid Idrus remain to promote his personal charisma, the future of personal charisma within the bureaucratic organisation is unclear. It is possible that the personal charisma held by his grandson, Sayyid Saggaf, will be elevated to the level of the grandfather, and stories will emerge about his miracles. One limitation to this possibility is the greater distance that Sayyid Saggaf has long had from the direct instruction of students (that is, the cultivation of disciples); from an early age, he was involved in the structure of a large organisation and his teaching was limited (Saggaf al-Jufri 2010). Alternatively, it is possible that Alkhairaat will move towards rationalisa-

tion and legalisation, following the pattern of the state bureaucracy with a greater emphasis on textuality and depersonalised authority.

Conclusions

Although Islamic mass organisations in Indonesia are undoubtedly bureaucratic, it is crucial to remember that many of them are functionally a way to harness and perpetuate ideas of charisma. The bureaucratisation of Islam, especially when performed in a top-down process emanating from the state, can seem devoid of any but the most perfunctory charismatic ideals, often with the supernatural aspects of religious belief thoroughly tamed through heavy focus on scripture and rule-making. By contrast, in Indonesian Islamic organisations, which have grown largely from the ground up in the last century, the intense identification of charisma can be more clearly preserved.

While Alkhairaat is an extreme case of the preservation of charisma, in which the supernatural acts of the founder are venerated and highlighted through current practices, it is not unique in type, only in degree. A number of 'traditionalist' organisations in the country function in the same way. Very similar dynamics can be found in the organisation Nahdlatul Wathan, based on Lombok around the charismatic founder Muhammad Zainuddin Abdul Madjid and his descendants (see, for example, Thohri et al. 2015a, 2015b). Despite the increased focus on scriptural orthodoxy through Indonesia's New Order (1966–1998), Martin van Bruinessen (2007) found that this did not replace the strong charisma of Sufi 'saints' in their organisations, even as the structures of their ascetic networks became bureaucratised. Even in the largest Islamic organisation in Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama, there remains a strong strain of charismatic dynamism focused around certain key leaders. There have long been stories about the supernatural power of the organisation's founders (Zuhri 2007). More recently, tremendous charismatic power has been ascribed to the late Abdurrahman Wahid, known as Gus Dur, ranging from premonitions to communicating with prior saints to accomplishing work while simultaneously sleeping (Niam and Amin 2014). All these examples demonstrate that the pattern of Islamic organisational bureaucratisation to reinforce ideas of personal spiritual charisma is not limited to Alkhairaat. This case study can be used to speak more widely across many large Indonesian organisations.

These Islamic organisations, created in part because of the organisational fervour and normative isomorphism of Indonesian Muslims in the 20th century, follow a pattern that tweaks the Weberian mould: they grow

and are centred around the charisma of a great spiritual teacher. It is important for scholars to recognise and consider the continuing, unrationalised attention to personal charisma in these organisations and the back-seat position of legalism, so as to better account for some of their features that do not match other religious bureaucracies. For example, when understanding the position of leaders in traditionalist Islamic organisations in Indonesia, it is severely limiting to think of bureaucrats. The highest rungs of organisations must also be seen as potentially charismatic individuals, and lower levels need to be treated more as disciples than as cogs in a bureaucratic machine. Anya Bernstein has already made a similar observation vis-à-vis state bureaucrats (Bernstein and Mertz 2011: 7), that they are 'persons who sometimes engage in a kind of activity' (that is, the functioning of the state). This idea can be pushed even further for those populating this voluntary, religious bureaucracy in Indonesian Islamic organisations: they are human beings drawn into the work and answering to a different kind of authority. One consequence of this shift in viewing the personnel of Islamic organisations is to explain the limited capacity for the organisational bureaucracy to diverge from the vision of organisational leadership.

Similarly, appreciating the on-going role of charisma in Islamic organisations allows scholars to square the high level of religious bureaucratisation in Indonesia with the high level of belief in and attention to supernatural occurrences. A traditional view of bureaucratisation would render these supernatural aspects anathema. However, by seeing the organisations as institutionalised charisma, their appeal to non-textual traditions and their veneration of individuals associated with miraculous deeds is no longer a quirk; rather, it is a central part of organisational culture.

Finally, approaching the bureaucratisation of Islam through a lens other than legalisation provides a view of Islamic futures that are not merely the constant march of *shari'a* so often depicted in the literature. As bureaucratisation increases around the Muslim world, this will not necessarily lead to uniform textualism and depersonalisation. Rather, bureaucratisation from the ground up can be harnessed to perpetuate and reinforce the charisma of great spiritual leaders, even in the modern day and despite countervailing winds of rationalisation.

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